

The

# BRISBANE BUSHWALKER

Dec 2018 - Mar 2019



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BRISBANE BUSHWALKERS QUARTERLY NEWS

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BRISBANE BUSHWALKERS CLUB INC (EST. 1948)  
GPO BOX 1949, BRISBANE 4001  
[www.brisbanebushwalkers.org.au](http://www.brisbanebushwalkers.org.au)

## MEETINGS

**CLUB MEETING:** The Brisbane Bushwalkers Club meets every 2nd & 4th Wednesday of the month at the Newmarket Memorial Hall, cnr Enoggera Rd. & Ashgrove Ave., Newmarket. Except for December when the only meeting is on the 2nd Wednesday. All welcome.

**Start time:** 7:30pm for new members (for an introductory talk).  
8:00pm (or a bit earlier) for existing members.

**COMMITTEE MEETING:** Committee meetings are held on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 7.00pm at 228 Stafford Rd. Stafford. (cnr Gamelin Cres). All members are welcome to attend. (Check for December and January in case meetings are rescheduled.)

## MEMBERSHIP FEES

<u>Full Members:</u>	Singles	\$40 per annum
	Couples	\$60 per annum
Annual membership falls due 28th February.		
<u>Probationary Members:</u>	Singles	\$20 per 6 month

## FIRST AID CERTIFICATES

To encourage members to maintain a current First Aid certificate, the Club will organise courses for Full members (not Probationary members).

The Club will refund 50% of cost upon completion.

## EQUIPMENT HIRE

The following equipment is available **for club activities**.

The charge *between meetings* per item is:

Foam mat	\$2.00
Self inflating mat	\$5.00
Stove	\$5.00
Tent or Pack	\$10.00

*Members can hire up to 4 items at one time for a maximum charge of \$10 per person.*

All equipment may be booked for hire by emailing the Equipment Officer. Pre-booking will ensure availability.

**PLB:** The Club has several PLBs which Leaders may borrow, at no cost, for approved club activities only.

## LIBRARY

**Free loan to members:-**

Books, Magazines, DVDs, CDs

**Free loan to leaders:-**

Maps and Rasters

**Duration of loan:-** 2 weeks for Maps, 4 weeks for all other items. If unable to return items on time please put them in the mail.

**For Sale:-**

Snake bandages: \$10.00

Car stickers and badges: 3.00

Club T shirts, jackets, vests

## COVER PHOTOGRAPH

Swimming through the Lower Portals on Mt Barney Creek

Photo: Matt Dunleavy

## CLUB OFFICIALS

### Committee Members for 2018/2019

President	Stephen Simpson	
	email: president@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Vice President	Marion Daverniza	
	email: vicepresident@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Secretary	<i>vacant</i>	
	email: secretary@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Treasurer	Tom Cowlshaw	0427 226 006
	email: treasurer@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Outings	Diana Norkaitis	
	email: outings@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Safety & Training	Nick Brooking	
	email: training@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Membership	Dwan Moore	
	email: newmembers@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Librarian	Margretha Gould (& Julie Brown)	
	email: library@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Equipment	Steve Cockburn (& Jenny Howell)	
	email: equipment@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Photographic	Angie Sobyra (& Ian Poynten)	
	email: photographic@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Social	Libby Andersen	
	email: social@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Technology Officer	Shaun Johnston	
	email: technology@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Abseil Coordinator	Lynley Murtagh	
	email: abseiling@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	

### Non-committee assistants

Members Registrar	Anna Bransden	0432 248 945
	email: registrar@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Website Admin	Shaun Johnston	
	email: webadmin@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	
Editors	Eugene Hedemann (& Jenny Zohn)	
	email: editor@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au	

Web Content Editor Peter Hunt  
email: content@brisbanebushwalkers.org.au

*If you would like amendments made to pages on the website, discover that documents are missing or need updating, or have suggestions or questions about the website's content and structure, please forward your requests and concerns to the new Web Content Editor's email address, and Peter will address your query.*

### Contact Officers

0431 691 773 (Tom Cowlshaw) or  
0423 095 580 (Steve Cockburn) or  
0434 194 996 (Barry Culley)

*These are VOICE ONLY numbers (ie. no SMS)*

The Brisbane Bushwalkers Quarterly News is a selection of articles that have been posted on the Brisbane Bushwalkers web site over the past few months. This newsletter will be published quarterly - or thereabouts - depending on the number of articles that are posted.

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### Compulsory items for Day Walks and Other Activities

*These items are also referred to by the club as "Always Take" or "Page 3" items.*

Back pack	Paper and pencil
Warm clothes (3 layers)	Whistle
Raincoat	Torch
Food (lunch, snacks, spare)	First aid kit
Hat & sunscreen	Matches or lighter
Footwear (closed-toe)	Change of clothes and shoes for driving home
Water (at least 2 or 3 litres)	Money for car pooling & drinks/snacks

### Transport Costs

Passengers are asked to pay a contribution to the driver for their share of car expenses. Each passenger should expect to contribute 10-15 cents per km. Large cars and 4WDs cost more to run than small cars. If there are 3 or more passengers then 10c/km is a reasonable contribution. If you are unhappy with the contribution amount, you are free to take your own vehicle.

### Activity Gradings

<b>Distances</b>	<b>S</b> Short	Under 10 km per day
	<b>M</b> Medium	10 to 15 km per day
	<b>L</b> Long	15 to 20 km per day
	<b>X</b> Extra Long	Over 20 km per day

Example -- **SDW-3B**  
Short Day Walk (**SDW**)  
Graded track with obstacles (**3**)  
Easy (**B**)

### Activity Type

Abbreviations for some common activities are: **DW** (Day Walk), **BC** (Base Camp), **S&T** (Safety & Training), **TW** (Through Walk), **SOC** (Social).

For a full list of Activity Type abbreviations, refer to: "What We Do / Activity Types" on the BBW website.

### Terrain Gradings 1 to 9

- 1 Path with smooth surface and low gradient
- 2 Well-formed path or graded track with some minor obstacles
- 3 Graded track, with obstacles such as rock or root intrusions, fallen debris, or creek crossings
- 4 Rough, unformed track or open terrain, with obstacles such as rock or root intrusions, fallen debris, or creek crossings
- 5 Rough or rocky terrain that may require use of hands, and/or creek rock hopping that requires small to moderate steps. Fallen debris possible
- 6 Steep, rough or rocky terrain requiring use of hands, and/or creek rock hopping requiring moderate to large steps or jumps. Fallen debris possible
- 7 Climb or descend steep rock, using hand or foot holds. May be some exposure. Good upper body strength required
- 8 Climb or descend near vertical rock with exposure, using widely spaced or small hand or foot holds. Climbing skills may be required. Good upper body strength required
- 9 Sustained climbing or descent of vertical or near vertical rock with exposure, using widely spaced or small hand or foot holds. Advanced climbing skills may be required. Good upper body strength required

### Fitness & Endurance Gradings A to E (Note: Walking times do not include breaks.)

- A** Basic - Generally suitable for new bushwalkers. About four hours of walking and possibly minor hills. Slower pace with frequent breaks.
- B** Easy - About five hours of walking and about 300m of elevation gain/loss per day.
- C** Moderate - About six hours of walking and about 600m of elevation gain/loss per day. Agility required.
- D** Hard - Good fitness, endurance and agility required. About seven hours of walking and about 800m of elevation gain/loss per day.
- E** Very Hard - High fitness, endurance and agility required. About eight hours of walking and about 1000m of elevation gain/loss per day.
- F** Extreme - Very high fitness, endurance and agility required. About twelve hours of walking and greater than 1000m of elevation gain/loss per day.



## Notice: Mystery Track Closure - Lamington, Binna Burra

*Emailed to Leaders List, 28 Feb 2019*

QPWS is facing increased challenges in managing protected areas due to increased / illegal usage triggered by social media promotion. Such management can be via closure and/or diversions. QPWS are asking for BBW support in a track closure.

The Mystery Track at Binna Burra (officially closed in the eighties) is the latest hot spot being promoted on social media. A section of the old route was impacted by landslide several years ago and a new route to avoid this area developed in a very steep area and the resultant erosion is negatively impacting the key values of this world heritage listed park.

A number of unauthorised ropes have been installed to assist people climb up and down the steep sections in places which is against QPWS policies and poses a potential safety risk for users and QPWS.

Therefore QPWS will be closing this route, removing any fixed ropes and signing it appropriately.

**As of now, BBW will not undertake, approve or promote the Mystery Track as part of any club activity.**

An alternate off track walk option is to rock hop up the Coomera from Gwongoorool. QPWS advise the current low flows due to the unseasonal dryness provide a good opportunity to undertake this approach.

Please help protect our wonderful forests and fauna by adhering to these changes.

Also, Rangers are currently working hard to re-open the Illinbah circuit and have made good progress due to the low flows in the Coomera and hope to re-open the track in coming weeks.

Diana Norkaitis  
Outings Officer

## Notice: New developments at Walkabout Creek

*Posted by: Bea Duffield, January 2019*

There has been some new landscaping and car parking installed at Walkabout Creek, Enogerra Reservoir. So if you are doing the Enogerra Reservoir Circuit anticlockwise, instead of having to walk along the road to get to the bus stop and to start the walk, you can now walk along the path from the top car park, through the new car parking area and along the new concrete path that connects directly to the bus stop car park. Much nicer than going along the road.

## Notice: Trek To Connect - Fundraising walk for suicide prevention initiatives

*Emailed to BBW Secretary, 23 Mar 2019*

I am touching base to share with you an event Wesley Mission Queensland has coming up 'Do a Trek to Connect'. We are currently recruiting teams of four to trek together and raise funds for suicide prevention initiatives. I was hoping you may be able to share the below information with your network and help save lives through your support.

Trek to Connect is a unique opportunity to challenge yourself and raise vital funds for suicide prevention. This Trek is not a race, but a life-changing experience you don't want to miss - and every step you take could help save a life. Trek to Connect covers 42km over 12 hours, with spectacular immersion amongst nature from Lake Manchester to Enoggera on the 19 May 2019.

Attached is the information booklet outlining the nature of the event, including the route, fundraising goals and registration information.

This very special event is strictly limited to 25 teams so please, click here to jump straight to registering your spot!

Stef Rochford

Community Fundraising and Events Coordinator, Fundraising

For more information visit: [www.trektoconnect.org.au](http://www.trektoconnect.org.au)

## Article: Has England's trail system lost its way?

*Emailed to BBW Secretary, 1 Apr 2019 from BBW member Peter Jackson*

*"With so many members interested in walking in the UK, this recent article in the Cicerone newsletter may be of interest to those members."*

Title: Has England's trail system lost its way?

[https://www.cicerone.co.uk/has-englands-trail-system-lost-its-way?  
utm\\_campaign=Extra0319&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=newsletter](https://www.cicerone.co.uk/has-englands-trail-system-lost-its-way?utm_campaign=Extra0319&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter)

Summary:

In little more than half a century Britain has developed a remarkable long-distance trail network that now numbers around 1500 paths and ways of all description. Like Scotland's 29 Great Trails, the 15 National Trails in England and Wales are held up as the gold standard, but how did these routes come about, where do they go and what does their future look like? Andrew McCloy recounts the story of how we built up a fabulous domestic walking resource – and explains why it's now at risk.

.....

*On 1 January 2026, just seven years from now, any path used by the public but not recorded on the Definitive Map (the official record of rights of way in England and Wales held by local authorities) will be lost forever as the process for recording historic paths will end for good. England and Wales can be justly proud of its 140,000 miles of public rights of way, an achievement every bit as important as the first long-distance footpaths that were created by the same momentous 1949 legislation that had at its heart the notion of access, freedom and public entitlement. But away from the flagship National Trails it's a system increasingly under strain. Obstructions, missing waymarks, unfulfilled legal orders and general under-promotion are making local paths harder to follow, unleashing a dangerous downward spiral of declining use and neglect; then add to that the spectre that many unrecorded historic thoroughfares, even some used today, might be lost forever.*

## Trip Report: Around Mt Bangalora

Posted by Jon Beer, Feb 2019

Activity: "Around Mt Bangalora", Leader: Jarrah Gard, MDW-6D, 17/2/19

Reynolds Gorge is the main feature of this walk and for years I'd wanted to do it. The day was warm and 'perfect' as going through the gorge requires compulsory swims, and jumping or sliding into water holes often being totally immersed in deep pools.

As someone who loves swimming, I was a bit bemused when the group was held up by something I couldn't see. When at the front of the group I learnt that a small (harmless!?) snake in the pool below was the reason for the delay. So I said "can I go?" and was allowed to drop into the pool passing the still struggling little snake with no problem. I continued down the gorge uninhibited taking appropriate care all the way.

When we were all safely through the gorge and had a comfortable lunch in the adjacent side gorge - no good water there - we commenced the walk out. Apart from the snake there were a couple of other incidents, which slowed the group down, but we all got out safely. I must thank Jarrah our leader and really all of the other walkers for assisting greatly (along with some very generous farmers) for ensuring the difficult exit for one member was as efficient as it could be.

At the end of the day I was very satisfied with having done Reynolds Gorge, but will remember the outing for more important reasons. Mainly how good it was to be in a group of very positive and supportive people, which emphasises the purpose of walking in an organisation such as BBW. Thanks again to the others on the day, and after the outing as well.



BBW web page: GPS Trace: "Around Bangalora"

## Trip Report: Summer Creek with early exit

Posted by Jarrah Gard, Feb 2019

Activity: "Summer Creek Falls", Leader: Jarrah Gard, MDW-7C, 3/2/19

Summer Creek is in the Conondales and offers beautiful pools for swimming, moderate rock-hopping up the creek, a spectacular gorge to swim through and a two part waterfall to climb.

We drop down a grassy slope into the creek, then it is fairly easy rock hopping until lunch time and some superb pools for swimming. Packs have to be waterproofed for the next section which involves swimming through a canyon, clambering over some large boulders and another swim to the base of the waterfall. The climb up the two sections of the waterfall requires competence climbing up steep rock, care, plus the ability to cope with exposure.

Once up the waterfall, we start back on part of the Great walk, before picking up a faint track back to the road and the cars.

Report:

On the ridge walking from the road to the creek, lantana has returned somewhat since large fire over 2 years ago, although still much sparser than before the fire. Entry into creek still quite good.

Water levels as low, or lower, than I have ever seen. Barely a trickle at any waterfall, several pools were around 1m lower than previous trips.

Several rain showers passed through, beginning at morning tea. Rock became incredible slippery for everyone, slowing travel, causing a number of falls and making any exposure very dangerous. Choice was made to exit at the large pool just below the first swim through gorge.

No issues with exit route, roads, parking, etc.



BBW web page: GPS Trace: "Summer Creek with early exit"



# Trip Report: Kosciuszko National Park - Ten plus peaks

Photos by Chris Hall

Activity: Kosciuszko National Park - Ten plus peaks (Anthony Logan, LTW-4/5C, 13-17 Jan 2019)

Trek around the Kosciuszko Main Range:

- 12th Jan: Meet in Canberra and drive to Jindabyne (obtain gas, park pass etc)
- 13th Jan: Drive to Guthega and start walk
- 13th to 17th Jan: Wander around the main range and summit the 10 "highest peaks" on the Australian mainland. Camp Wilkinsons Creek, North Rams Head, Snowy River
- 17th Jan: Return to Guthega and drive to Jindabyne
- 18th Jan: Drive am to Canberra



BBW web page: GPS Trace:  
"Mt Kosciuszko 10+ Peaks"



Rams Head cairn



Snow gum tree that would be over 300 years old



Hedley Tarn looking great in the morning



Our 2nd camp just above Wilkinsons creek



March flies were abundant



Temperatures in the high 30's, let's lie down in the ice says Anthony



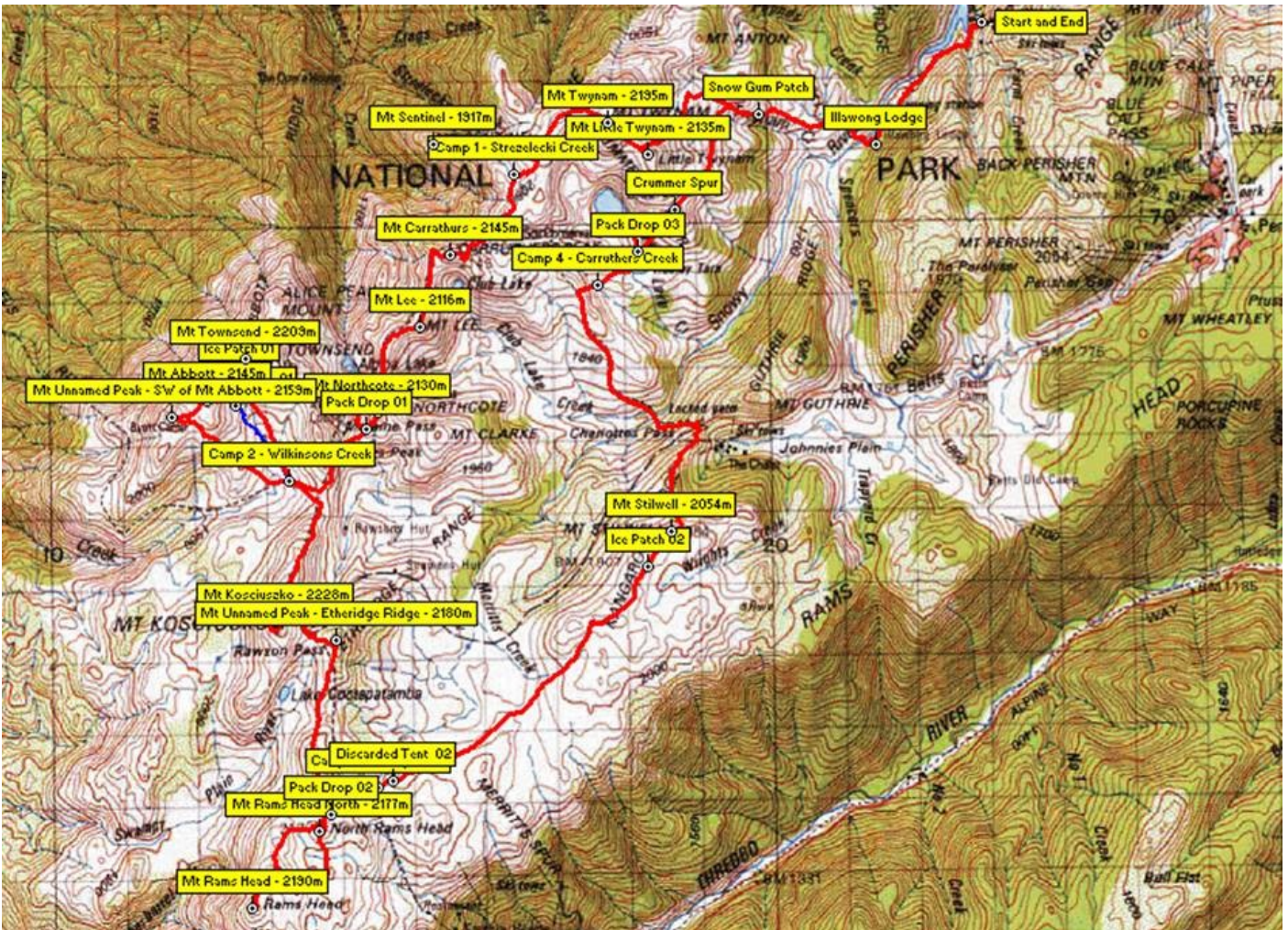
Rocky outcrop in the Rams Head circuit



# Trip Report: Kosciuszko 10+ Peaks

Posted by Chris Hall, January 2019

Overview Map (from 1:100,000 OziExplorer NSW, VIC & SA series)



## Australia's Ten Highest Peaks:

- Mt Kosciuszko: 2228m
- Mt Townsend: 2209m
- Mt Twynam: 2195m
- Rams Head: 2190m
- Unnamed peak on Etheridge Ridge: 2180m
- Rams Head North: 2177m
- Unnamed Peak southwest of Abbott Peak: 2159m
- Abbott Peak: 2145m
- Carruthers Peak: 2145m

Not done this walk

- Alice Rawson Peak: 2160m

Additional peaks walked – 13 peaks all up, plus knolls and rocky outcrops

- Mt Lee: 2120m
- Mt Little Twynam: 2135m
- Mt Northcote: 2130m
- Mt Stilwell: 2034m

Led by Anthony Logan this was a moderate to tough walk. All 5 days were in high 30 degree temperature and the march flies were out in force. The march flies were active most of the sunlight hours but walking was one way of lessening their attacks, so we did so even during the heat of the day, except day 4. Day 4 was very hot at lunch so we snoozed for some hours at Charlottes Pass under the snow gums. The wildflowers were amazing and so were the peaks and streams. Some ice patches were still

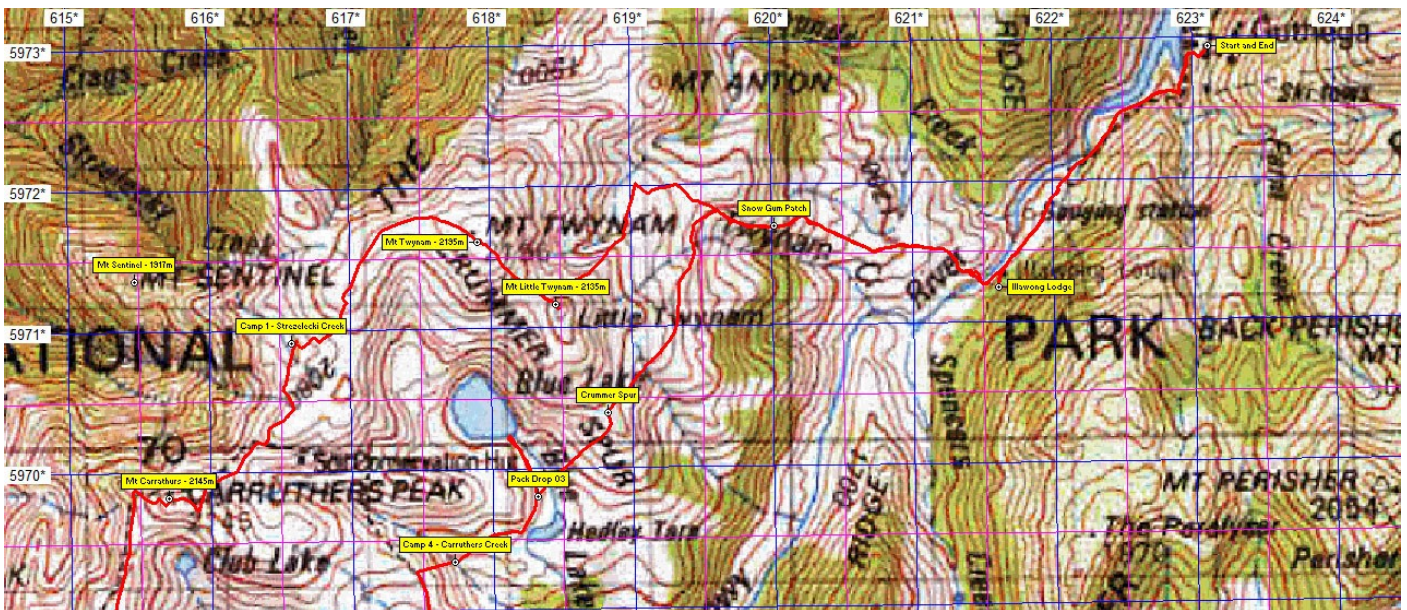


present and our maps below show where we played in a couple. The heat was unusual for that time year, with Canberra up to 42 degrees. Despite the recent dryness and heat, there was plenty of water to be found.

### Trip Statistics

Day	Distance	Ascent	Start	End
1	9.7 km	719 m	9:00 AM	3:00 PM
Morning tea – Snow Gum Patch			11:00 AM	
Lunch – Mt Twynam			1:30 PM	
2	13.2 km	732 m	8:00 AM	5:15 PM
Morning tea – Mt Northcote			10:40 AM	
Lunch – Camp 2			1:00 PM	
3	13.8 km	705 m	8:00 AM	4:00 PM
Morning tea – Toilets			10:00 AM	
Lunch – Mt Rams Head North			1:00 PM	
4	10.5 km	350 m	8:00 AM	6:15 PM
Morning tea – Kangaroo Ridge			10:15 AM	
Lunch – Charlotte Pass			12:30 PM – 3:15 PM	
5	9.3 km	323 m	8:00 AM	2:00 PM
Morning tea – Crummer Spur			10:00 AM	
Lunch – Snow Gum Patch			12:00 MD	
<b>Total</b>	<b>56.5 km</b>	<b>2829 m</b>		

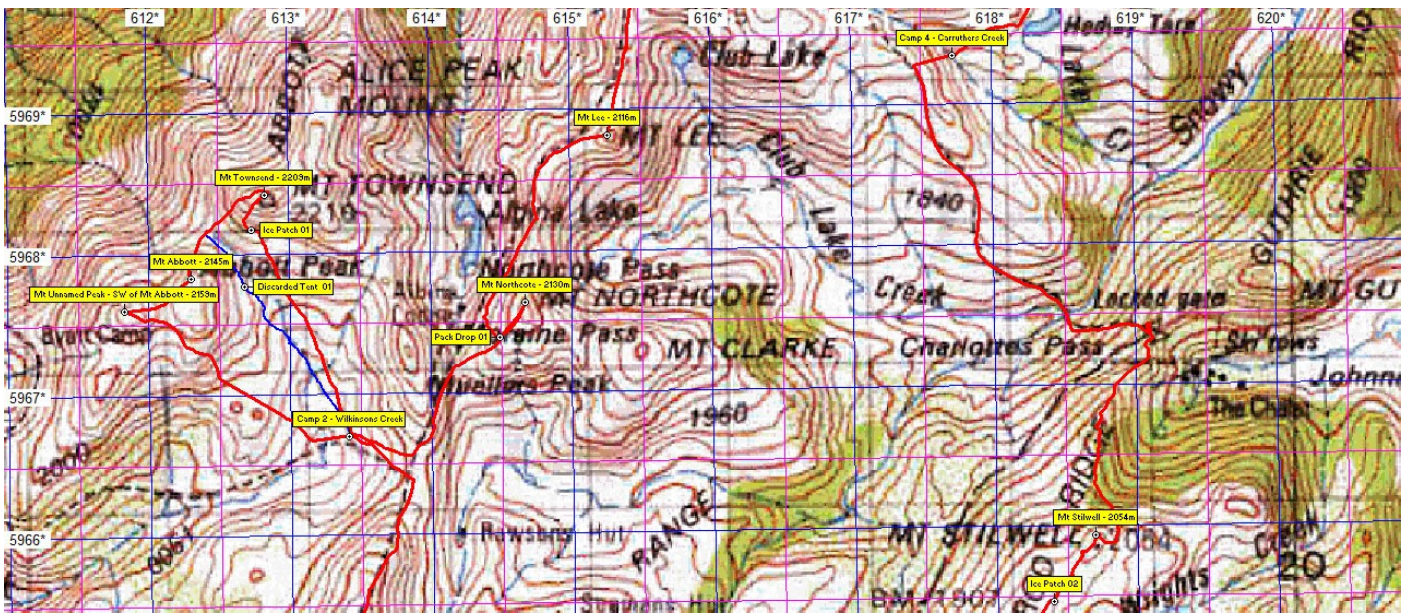
### Detail Maps – Map 1 (the next 3 maps can be cut and joined together, by aligning the Eastings vertical lines, for a bigger picture)



It's worth a swim in the Snowy River under the swing bridge just past Illawong Lodge on a warm day, prior to your next up. We didn't do it but did so on day 5. Shannon and Chris climbed Little Twynam this first day whilst the rest of the group went to Twynam. Anthony, Di and Richard climbed Little Twynam on day 5 after we had climbed to Crummer Spur. The first camp is just below a waterfall on the Strzelecki Creek. A few of our group ventured only part way to Mt Sentinel that afternoon (Di may have got all the way ?).

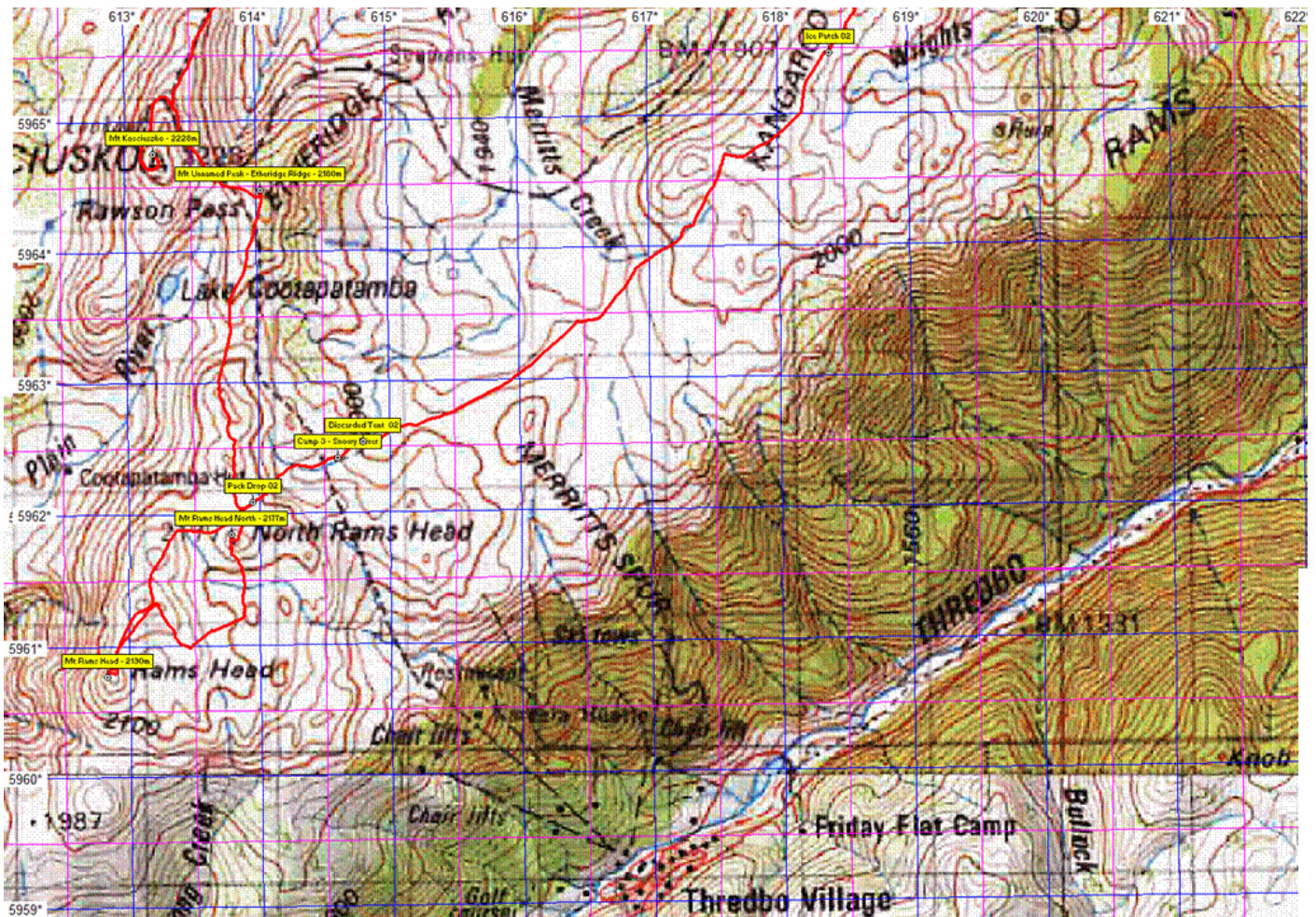


## Detail Maps – Map 2



Day 2 saw us camp in the large boulders above/east of Wilkinson's Creek. After climbing Mt Townsend we decided to continue to Abbott Peak rather than venture out to Alice Rawson Peak. The heat got to Shannon and Chris who returned to camp via the saddle between Townsend and Abbott. An old discarded tent was found on the way down. In the streams in this area we sighted small galaxia fish, skinks and crayfish (*euastacus reiki* and *euastacus crassus*), many of which are considered rare.

## Detail Maps – Map 3



The highlight of day 3 was climbing Mt Kosciuszko, along with many tourists who shortcut from the SE via Thredbo. We also did some explorer in the Rams Head area, with Chris and Shannon doing a little circuit of some rocky outcrops. It was hoped to camp



just below Rams Head North, at the very headwaters of the Snowy River but water was minimal and we had time, so we camped further below and past the tourist track, a great site. We found a 2nd discarded tent the next morning (day 4) on our descent. Leonie peeled off in the valley to later meet us at Charlottes Pass, as she had already walked Kangaroo Ridge. Before Mt Stilwell we played in a small ice field to cool down. We spent a few hours in Charlottes Pass under trees to avoid the midday sun, cooled off in the Snowy River and found a great campsite on Carruthers Creek. The next morning we visited Hedley Tarn and cooled down in the Blue Lake. After the split in the group to Little Twynam we met for lunch at the Snow Gum Patch and had a great swim down at the swing bridge, before the very hot 3km walk back to the car on Guthega Rd. This was an awesome walk and I will go back in a heart beat. Walking across country is soft underfoot but the shin high vegetation and hidden holes make it a little slower than the terrain may initially suggest. Were short sock saver gaiters, longer ones in the wet. I suggest the grading for this walk be raised from a 4C to a 5C, mainly due to the rock scrambling done on Mt Townsend and Rams Head North, some of which was a personal preference of group members, rather than taking the easier option, or not finding the easier option until summiting.

On Map	Name	Zn	Easting	Northing	Alt(m)
Yes	Camp 1 - Strezelecki Creek	55H 616588	5970909	2035	
Yes	Camp 2 - Wilkinsons Creek	55H 613420	5966700	1950	
Yes	Camp 3 - Snowy River	55H 614601	5962422	2032	
Yes	Camp 4 - Carruthers Creek	55H 617732	5969349	1855	
Yes	Crummer Spur	55H 618818	5970389	1991	
Yes	Discarded Tent 01	55H 612683	5967769	2036	
Yes	Discarded Tent 02	55H 614798	5962538	2004	
Yes	Ice Patch 01	55H 612740	5968177	2079	
Yes	Ice Patch 02	55H 618391	5965465	2046	
Yes	Illawong Lodge	55H 621615	5971249	1645	
Yes	Mt Abbott - 2145m	55H 612298	5967832	2132	
Yes	Mt Carrathurs - 2145m	55H 615703	5969819	2156	
Yes	Mt Kosciuszko - 2228m	55H 613219	5964750	2234	
Yes	Mt Lee - 2116m	55H 615267	5968810	2116	
Yes	Mt Little Twynam - 2135m	55H 618457	5971164	2117	
Yes	Mt Northcote - 2130m	55H 614673	5967635	2130	
Yes	Mt Rams Head - 2190m	55H 612828	5960777	2195	
Yes	Mt Rams Head North - 2177m	55H 613787	5961839	2172	
Yes	Mt Sentinel - 1917m	55H 615476	5971359	1917	
Yes	Mt Stilwell - 2054m	55H 618697	5965929	2056	
Yes	Mt Townsend - 2209m	55H 612833	5968416	2200	
Yes	Mt Twynam - 2195m	55H 617914	5971618	2199	
Yes	Mt Unnamed Peak - Etheridge ...	55H 614035	5964477	2193	
Yes	Mt Unnamed Peak - SW of Mt ...	55H 611828	5967606	2140	
Yes	Pack Drop 01	55H 614492	5967395	2089	
Yes	Pack Drop 02	55H 613949	5962081	2116	
Yes	Pack Drop 03	55H 618309	5969811	1868	
Yes	Snow Gum Patch	55H 620010	5971697	1831	
Yes	Start and End	55H 623109	5972930	1626	

**Elevation Profile** (9 of the official 10 Highest Peaks have . 13 peaks climbed in total)





# Trip Report: Mt Glorious Barracks Working Bee (Basecamp 19-20 Jan)

Posted by Chris Hall, 31 Jan 2019

What a great day we had. It was very rewarding knowing that the Rangers and BBW members would come along to their next Barracks visit and say "Wow ! Look at this oasis just off Mt Glorious Road".

It was lovely to get new and old attendees to the working bee. The team worked together attending to the following things:

- track maintenance was conducted on the Manarina track and on the Western Window track from Miaila through to Lawton Road the entire barracks area was mowed
- the site perimeter to the tree line was cleared by hand and weed eaters
- half a cubic metre of deco was brought in and screeded in the area under the shelter shed
- a trailer load of general rubbish was removed from the grounds and taken to the Arana Hills waste transfer station
- the shed was cleaned and a perspex sheet was fixed to a broken window
- leaves were removed from the roof gutters
- all rooms and amenities in the barracks were cleaned
- low hanging branches of trees in the grounds were removed
- a general clean up of the area and all buildings took place

See the photos. The groups doing the tracks located away from the Barracks did a great job and returned just in time for lunch. Arthur provided some treats which were scoffed down by the hard working group.

This time there weren't any reports of scrub itch but one carpet python was surprised by our feverish activities and decided to retreat to the forest.

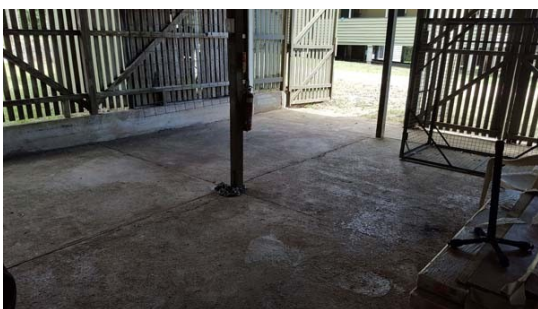
The 2nd outdoor table wasn't able to be repaired this time as a different size of timber was required - next time. Further projects were identified for the 20th of July working bee - now on the BBW calendar. Well done to all and especially Arthur Walton our coordinator with the D'Aguilar Forest Park Rangers.



Arthur topping up the deco



Broken window pane covered with perspex



Shed cleaned out



The boys removing bricks and reo from the slab near the helipad



The 'lean to' shed emptied, cleaned and trees pruned



Sand pit removed and area tidied up

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# Good Ideas #1: The InReach

*Richard Walton*

## General Introduction

There are a few pieces of equipment/ideas that I have been habitually using while bushwalking for a number of years now. While I consider these to be common knowledge, conversations with a few club members has led me to the realisation that not many people in the club are aware of them. With that in mind, I thought I would write a couple of articles to share some of the ideas that I have found useful. I hope that you find them useful too.

## The InReach

The InReach is best described as satellite phone that only sends texts (no voice calls). The unit is about the size of a large pack of cigarettes (about the size and weight of older PLBs) (although there is a new smaller unit recently released). The unit has the following features:

- GPS enabled
- Two way messaging (free text; send any message you want). Does not rely on mobile phone coverage.
- Can send emails or texts. The texts appear just as a normal text on the recipients mobile; together with a link to a map with your GPS location. The recipient simply responds to the text as they would with any other text.
- Trigger an SOS to a US based call centre.
- Turn on tracking to share and view GPS coordinates with anyone in the world.
- Weather forecasts
- Posts to social media.
- Can be paired with a mobile phone via Bluetooth (to make messaging much easier).

## How does the InReach compare with other similar devices?

### PLB

- Pros
  - PLBs use the COSPAS-SARSAT, the international emergency satellite network. This is simply the best satellite network we have for emergencies (ie. the best coverage and best penetration though trees. etc).
  - No subscription fees; once you buy your PLB it is free to use.
  - SOS goes direct to the emergency services organisation in the country you are in.
- Cons
  - Cannot send text messages or any other information apart from the SOS (with embedded GPS location).

### InReach

- Pros
  - Two way free form text messaging
  - Many other communication benefits as listed previously.
  - Provides non-emergency web based tracking information.
- Cons
  - Monthly subscription fees (different "plans", similar to mobile phones)
  - Satellite coverage not as good as a PLB. Uses the commercial Iridium satellite network. This is the best commercial satellite phone network but not as good as the COSPAS-SARSAT international emergency satellite network.
  - SOS goes to a call centre in the US.
  - Does not work as well as a PLB (even with satellite cover) (e.g. under trees).

### Spot Tracker (added for completeness)

- Pros
  - One way text messaging; but only one pre-programmed message.
  - Provides non-emergency web based tracking information.
  - Needs an ongoing subscription, but cheaper than that for an InReach.
- Cons
  - Monthly subscription fees (different "plans", similar to mobile phones)
  - Satellite coverage not as good as that used for PLBs. Uses the commercial GlobalStar satellite network. Not as good as the Iridium satellite network used by InReach.
  - SOS goes to a call centre in the US.
  - Does not work as well as a PLB (even with satellite cover) (e.g. under trees).



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The different satellite networks are important. For example, if you have ever used a satellite phone (or know anyone who has) you will know that they don't work like they do in the movies; where someone picks up the sat-phone, dials and immediately gets a connection. In the real world one can be in outback Queensland (with a clear view of the sky in all directions and either 1) not get a signal or 2) stroll under the shade of a coolabah tree and lose the signal.

So what does all this mean? Well, if you are in trouble a PLB will simply give the best SOS signal (better satellite coverage, better penetration through trees). Also, the PLB costs nothing to run (once you have purchased it). However, for anything other than an SOS the PLB is of no use.

The InReach provides substantial additional functionality to the PLB while at the same time providing SOS capability. However, the SOS signal is not as strong as that for the PLB (fewer satellites, poorer tree penetration). Notwithstanding that, many people carry only an InReach and the evidence is that the SOS system works. The InReach requires a monthly subscription.

The Spot (for completeness) provides more functionality to a PLB but substantially less than that of an InReach. As with the InReach, many people carry only a Spot Tracker and the evidence is that the SOS system works. The Spot Tracker requires a monthly subscription but is cheaper than an InReach.

What do I personally do? Well, I own both. On short trips (one, two or three days) I just carry my PLB (and have an emergency contact - see good ideas #4). On longer trips (+3 days) or when in New Zealand, I carry both. I carry the PLB because it has much better SOS capability and I carry the InReach because I find its additional functionality invaluable on extended walks. This is especially true in New Zealand where the weather greatly impacts on walks; good weather sees one finishing the walk early and bad weather sees one holed up in a hut or trapped by a flooded river for (possibly) days. For example, if one is trapped by the weather and will be out a day late, but the party is healthy and in good spirits, the InReach will prevent a search and rescue commencing in poor weather with its associated risk to searchers.

What made me decide to buy an InReach? I had known about them for a few years but was always reluctant to buy one because 1) they were just more weight in my pack and 2) on walks I like to cut any ties with the "real" world and....well....vanish. Well, one year I was walking in the New Zealand west coast (where it rains a lot). The weather was glorious (very unusual), I was making good time, I had food and I would have liked to extend my walk by a few days. However, I would have emerged from the bush two days late and about 50km from where I was meant to be. By then both my emergency contact and the transport operator who was going to pick me up would have initiated a full scale air and ground search. At best the authorities would have locked me up and thrown away the key; at worst it may have been the end of the Trans-Tasman Partnership. Not to mention how annoyed/frustrated I was at missing such a good bushwalking opportunity. So I bought an InReach.

I have found, to my surprise and delight, that the InReach has provided additional, rather than less freedom in the hills. While I have thankfully not had to test the SOS function, the things I regularly use it for are:

- Changing my walk plans (sometimes quite radically) and notifying my emergency contact.
- Changing pickup times when running late or early.
- Getting weather updates (this is not as simple as it may sound and really needs a separate article to flesh out).
- Booking transport and or accommodation.
- Checking in with my emergency contact when on an extended solo walk in wilderness areas. (e.g. eight days in the Blue Mountains). This limits the search area if one does not emerge from the scrub on time.
- Checking in with my emergency contact after finishing a walk when there is no mobile coverage (e.g. anywhere on the Milford Road in New Zealand).
- Stirring up my daughters (an important part of being a father which should not be suspended just because one is out bushwalking). In particular one needs to remind one's children that one is still alive and therefore there will be no inheritance just yet.

The one tip I would give in using an InReach is this. Make sure your emergency contact has all the details/phone numbers of all your transport and accommodation arrangements; so they can change them for you. This is because most people don't understand the limitations of a satellite phone/InReach. These are:

- You pay for all in-coming and out-going texts. So you really don't want a flurry of texts like one gets on a mobile.
- Often things need to be done on the internet or by a phone call (that old-school voice thing). Your contact can spend the time on the phone waiting and/or convincing people that they need to do something. This is pretty hard to do via text in the wilderness; especially when you need to get walking because a nor-wester is bearing down on you.
- Most people have no idea the limitations in communication you have (e.g. you are not waiting via the phone, you probably turn your InReach off and it can take some time for the text message to get through). You need to let your contact do all the messy stuff and then send you a concise message; at a pre-determined time when you will have the InReach on and be waiting for a message.
- Your contact understands where you are, what you are up to and what the weather is doing. If something is time-sensitive, they will act upon it.

I will also share one word of warning. The InReach, and I am guessing most (if not all) Satellite communication devices, are very sensitive to the surrounding topography and vegetation cover. Further, it is not obvious why sometimes there is/is not reception. One can be in a large clearing and have no signal; then move 10m onto a small rise and have perfect reception. Or, one can have no reception for 30 minutes, then have perfect two-way texting for 30 minutes and then lose reception. In addition, more worrying, sometimes the link to the satellite is fine but there is a problem with Garmin or the mobile phone carrier of the recipient. The take-home message is that, in my experience, one needs to allow for the fact that any communication could be delayed by (say) 30

minutes (not so unusual) to 1 hour or more. (this is why I always carry a PLB).

So the InReach is not like a mobile (well, a mobile in a capital city anyway). However, I am not sure the limitations are really that bad. It may be more that we all watch way too much American TV and have an illusion that satellite communication devices are much better than they really are. Not sure.

Anyway, notwithstanding the limitations, these days I would not be without my InReach on an extended bushwalk. The more I move away from track walking (with fairly well defined walk times) to wilderness/backcountry walking (where one is more-or-less making it up as one goes) the more I find the InReach invaluable.



*Halfway up Milford Sound (New Zealand) late afternoon after summiting a 1600m peak that morning. Trying to call in a boat and discovering the two-way you were given has a flat battery. All the while standing at sandfly ground zero. I'll bet she is glad her tramping buddy had an InReach.*



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# Good Ideas #2: The PLB

*Richard Walton*

So, someone in your group is hurt and you have decided to activate your PLB. What now? Well, first you have to understand a little about how PLBs work.

But before we start, the disclaimer. This article is not a comprehensive treatise on PLBs. Rather, this article lists a few aspects of PLBs and their use that are not widely known. It is my experience that these aspects are of considerable and immediate practical benefit to anyone in the unfortunate position of having to activate a PLB.

OK, let's get on with it. PLBs use the COSPAS-SARSAT international emergency satellite network. There are three groups of satellites within this network.

- Six satellites in geostationary Earth orbit called GEOS. These are located above the equator and always remain above one point on the equator. These satellites are your friend. If you are in the mid-latitudes of the southern hemisphere (e.g. Australia or New Zealand) and have a clear view north from more-or-less the horizon to above you, then your PLB signal will be picked up by one of these satellites almost immediately the PLB is activated.
- Five satellites in polar low-altitude Earth orbit called LEOS. If you are in Australia or New Zealand and don't have a clear view north (e.g. in a south facing steep and narrow rocky gully as I was when I activated my PLB a couple of years ago) then the GEOS are of no use to you. The good news is that the LEOS will pick up your signal. The bad news is that LEOS are not geostationary and pass your location (at worst) about once every five hours or so. So, if you are having a bad hair day, it may take five hours for your signal to be picked up plus whatever it takes to get a chopper to you. Not quite like the testimonials in PLB adds in your bushwalking magazine is it?
- Over 30 satellites in medium-altitude Earth orbit; you guessed it, MEOS. As the name suggests, these have an elevation somewhere between GEOS and LEOS. These have only been commissioned in the last year or so. The good news is that they greatly increase the coverage of the LEOS and therefore greatly reduce the detection time.

The take-home message? If at all possible, try to get a clear view north for your PLB (acknowledging that this is not always possible). Also, while PLBs can work under trees, they prefer a clear sky. So, if you are under trees, try to move to open ground (e.g. a river bed, a cliff top). If the casualty can't be moved, move the PLB to open ground. There are a few things to consider though.

- How far you are moving away from your casualty. Moving a long way could be a problem for a helicopter extraction or rescuer access.
- If you're deep in the Lamington rainforest there may not be much opportunity for a clear view anywhere; no matter how far you move.
- Rainforest will have a greater impact upon a signal than (say) a dry sclerophyll forest. So it may be more important to move out of a rainforest than a more open forest.

You have activated your PLB and are now waiting. Hopefully a helicopter is on the way. What you need to know is that in Australia civilian helicopter pilots are not allowed to use night vision goggles (the sort you see in the Arnold Schwarzenegger movies). So no one is going to come for you at night (by helicopter anyway). This should impact upon your decision making. For example, if it is mid-afternoon you need to make a decision pretty quickly whether or not to activate your PLB; otherwise you will be spending the night in the bush. Things are different in New Zealand; civilian pilots are allowed to use night vision goggles; so you can expect a night time rescue.

What happens when the helicopter gets to you? Well, first of all they have to find you. Despite what one would think, they don't just fly to within 5m of you location and hover. The GPS location from the PLB provides a 2km search radius. A PLB transmits signals at two separate frequencies; 406 MHz, used by satellites and 121.5 MHz, used by aircraft to locate you once they are close. The helicopter has to get a visual fix on you. The best thing you can do is put your head torch on your head, turn it on (high beam) and look at the helicopter. Other things you can do is wave coloured things (red and blue are best) such as pack liners or sleeping sheets. Also, remember that if the casualty is in the bush and the PLB is in the open; someone needs to be standing with the PLB. In practice the aircraft will fly pretty much to your location and the crew will look for you. If they don't see you the aircraft will start a pattern search. This involves flying around (in a logical, planned way) using the strength of the 121.5 MHz signal to locate you. When one is on the ground this has the disturbing appearance that they are leaving (based upon personal experience). Don't worry, they will eventually find the PLB, even if they don't see you.

Once you are found, the helicopter will land (preferably) if possible. If there are no nearby landing sites (e.g. you are on a steep slope) the helicopter will lower a paramedic at/near your location. Now, they will most likely lower the paramedic almost on top of you. This means there will be a phenomenal down draft that will blow just about anything away. So make sure everything is packed up, you are holding your packs (seriously), you grab the PLB and you protect the casualty from flying debris.

That is about all I wanted to say. Remember, this article is not a comprehensive treatise on PLBs. There is a lot more one needs to know and think about with respect to PLBs than I have written here. I have just listed a few aspects of PLBs and their use that are not widely known which are of practical benefit to anyone in the unfortunate position of having to activate a PLB.

Further Info:

<http://beacons.amsa.gov.au/about/how-they-work.asp>

<http://beacons.amsa.gov.au/activation/>

<https://www.cospas-sarsat.int/en/beacon-ownership/what-happens-when-i-activate-my-beacon>

<https://www.cospas-sarsat.int/en/system-overview/cospas-sarsat-system>

## Good Ideas #3: AdventureSmart

*Richard Walton*

Prior to 2009, if one was in New Zealand and heading off on a walk, one would fill in a form at a Department of Conservation (DOC) office, put it in a box and hopefully someone would come looking for you if you did not appear on your due date. This system was dropped in 2009 and moved to a self-management system. That is, one is responsible for one's own walk intentions and DOC has nothing to do with it (much like the Australian model has always been). However, the Kiwis put together a website full of good outdoor safety information called "AdventureSmart". A key part of this was an online outdoor intentions form.

Why am I mentioning this? Because it is just so good.

Let's go back a step. We all give someone our walk intentions right? Something like, "Going up Logan's with Johnno. Be back for dinner". Well, that may be of some use to someone in BBW who knows what you are talking about. But what if you applied that to a walk in NSW? Or Tasmania? Or New Zealand?

The key thing about the AdventureSmart outdoor intentions form is that it forces one to really think about what information is needed should one not return at the allotted time and place. For example:

- What is the date and time of the start/finish?
- How are you getting to/from the walk?
- Where is the car parked? What is the make/model/colour/rego?
- Where are you going after the walk?
- What gear have you got?
- What is your detailed route!!!!
- Etc. etc. etc.

Clearly the information becomes more relevant the longer the walk and the further from the normal walking areas. But think about it; do you normally give an exact time that you will be out? Does someone know where your car is parked? The first thing someone will do if you do not check in is to drive out and see if your car is there.

OK, if you have a play with the form you will see the email sent to your emergency contact is designed for Kiwis (e.g. Kiwi phone numbers). But remember, the key thing the form does is force you to write things down. When things go wrong in the bush it is surprising how isolated you are. You really can't have too much information out there for the emergency services; trust me on this.

One other benefit of the form (which I utilise quite often) is you put in all your transport and accommodation information (e.g. names, phone numbers). So if you are running early/late you can use your inReach (Good Ideas #1) to get your emergency contact to change your bookings

Anyway, the form is here; have a look and play with it. I use the form for all walks I do. I commend it to you.

<https://www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions/>



*Not sure what this young lady is up to but I hope she has lodged an AdventureSmart trip intentions with her emergency contact.  
(Princess Mountains, Fiordland, New Zealand).*



## Good Ideas #4: Emergency Contacts

*Richard Walton*

We all use an emergency contact don't we? Of course we do; it is one of the key components of the outdoor safety code, "Always tell someone where you are going". Well, I would just like to challenge you to think about who you are using for your emergency contact.

There is a story going around the club where someone set off their PLB. The Australian Maritime Safety Authority phoned the emergency contact listed against the PLB (the owners elderly mum). When she answered the phone and they identified themselves she responded to the effect, "I don't want any today thank you" and promptly hung up. Thankfully there was a second number that AMSA called and the story ended well.

So who should you be using for your emergency contact? Remember, whoever you chose could be making life and death decisions on your welfare. Well, I suggest your contact needs meet the following criteria:

- Trustworthiness
- Reliability - we all have friends/relatives we trust totally (and love to death)...but wouldn't rely on them to turn up to dinner on time let alone have our life in their hands.
- Understand bushwalking
- Understand your level of bushwalking – if you set off your PLB, then it is serious; it won't be for a blister.
- Have a vested interest in your welfare – a relative you see once every six months will care about you; but won't be thinking about you.
- They need to take it all seriously.

To put all that another way, if we really think about it, many of our friends would simply put our walk intentions on the fridge (with only a cursory read, if any) and never think of it again. More than once I have given my intentions to people and, upon my return, phoned them to let them know I am OK only to be told, "Great. I have not opened you email yet but I am sure you had a good time." ?\*^\$#()%#

My daughter and I have a good friend in New Zealand who is the world's best emergency contact. We sometimes stress test the system (unintentionally) when we are late out or have trouble with transport and are out of mobile coverage or....ahem...we forget. Next thing we know there are phone calls on our voice mail, to our accommodation, to the transport operator picking us up and...well...anyone else who will listen. Very embarrassing...but...good to know the system works!!

If you really think about it, really really and truly think about it, you will probably be able to count on a couple of fingers the people who meet the emergency contact criteria listed above.

Over to you.

*Example of InReach evening check-in with my daughter, my emergency contact, during a recent solo 3-day off-track tramp in Fiordland, New Zealand (times are in AEST). Hmmmm...my contact does not seem to be taking things seriously....*

